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PRECEDENCE
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FRP: .2, . . .6, .8

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ACTION: NONE INFO: CMASS-E (), NIO/WE, ODPH-H, CDPN-N,
ODPS-S, OGI/R/AT, OOE/EE, OOE/EI/PS, OOE/EI/SI, OOE/WE, OSA/PA/S,
OSWR/TTC/S, PLANFAC-E (), RF, SOV/CS, SOV/CS/CA, SOV/CS/S/I,
SOV/CS/S/M, SOV/CS/Y, SOV/DI/A, SOV/DI/HI, SOV/EAC, SOV/EAG, SOV/PA/C,
SOV/PA/D, SOV/PA/F, SOV/SE, SOV/SE/M, SOV/SE/R, SOV/SE/T, SOV/SFD,
SOV/SFE, ZSAG/MEB, ZSAG/PPB, ZSAG/SEB, FILE, DCI, D/DCI, DCI/EXDIR,
~~SA/DCI-2~~ D/DDO-4, CS/RF, SE/DRP, SE/HR, SE/USSR, ASG/MP, CI/UC, CR/E,
D/FBIS-2, D/NIEPS, DSD/DEB, IAD/IC, ICS/OHC/UR, NED, NED/MTB, NED/NWB,
NICAG/SP, NIO/USSR, OGI/ISI/CP, DIA/ERRS, PPD, SAG/MEB, SAG/PPB,
SAG/SEB-3, STD/MTP, (37/*)

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: NATO, UR, PINT, PEPR
SUBJECT: THE USSR AFTER BREZHNEV

REF: USNATO 7217

1. (SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES PRELIMINARY DEPARTMENT
ASSESSMENT OF IMPLICATIONS OF BREZHNEV'S DEATH AND NEW
SOVIET LEADERSHIP FOR USE AT NOVEMBER 16 POLADS
MEETING. DEPARTMENT ALSO AGREES THAT IT WOULD BE
USEFUL TO PREPARE BACKGROUND PAPER ON THIS SUBJECT FOR
NAC FALL MINISTERIAL AND MISSION AUTHORIZED TO PROPOSE
THAT THIS BE DONE AS OUTLINED REFTEL.

3. BEGIN TEXT OF PAPER ON SOVIET SUCCESSION:

A. INTRODUCTION.

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State Dept. review completed

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. WITH THE SELECTION OF YURIY ANDROPOV TO REPLACE LEONID BREZHNEV AS GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION,

WE ARE GAINING OUR FIRST VIEW OF WHAT THE NEW POLITBUREAU LINEUP MAY BE LIKE--AT LEAST FOR THE NEAR FUTURE. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT KONSTANTIN CHERNENKO, WIDELY TOUTED AS ANDROPOV'S PRIMARY RIVAL FOR POWER, MAY RECEIVE THE OTHER MAJOR POSITION HELD BY BREZHNEV: CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE USSR. THIS IS THE "HEAD OF STATE" POSITION WITHIN THE SOVIET SYSTEM, BUT TRADITIONALLY IT HAS CARRIED LESS POWER THAN THE GENERAL SECRETARYSHIP. A NEW CHAIRMAN SHOULD BE FORMALLY CHOSEN AT THE NEXT MEETING OF THE SUPREME SOVIET, NOW SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 23. NIKOLAY TIKHONOV -- ANOTHER BREZHNEV CRONY -- HOLDS THE THIRD MAJOR POSITION WITHIN THE SOVIET HIERARCHY: CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, OR "PRIME MINISTER." BEYOND THE TWO MAJOR PLAYERS, ANDROPOV AND CHERNENKO, THE PROSPECTS FOR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP ARE MURKY.

B. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

. FOLLOWING STALIN'S DEATH IN 1953, THE "NEW STALIN", GEORGIY MALENKOV, LASTED LESS THAN TWO WEEKS AS HEAD OF PARTY AND GOVERNMENT, AND IT WAS NOT UNTIL JUNE, 1957 THAT NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV WAS ABLE TO DEAL THE FINAL BLOW TO THE "ANTI-PARTY GROUP" OF MALENKOV, KAGANOVICH AND SHEPILOV AND ESTABLISH HIS OWN UNDISPUTED PRIMACY. FOLLOWING THE FALL OF KHRUSHCHEV ON OCTOBER 15, 1964, THE TRIUMVIRATE OF LEONID BREZHNEV, ALEKSEY KOSYGIN AND NIKOLAY PODGORNII PROVED MUCH MORE DURABLE, ALTHOUGH BY THE EARLY 1970'S IT WAS EVIDENT THAT BREZHNEV HAD BECOME THE DOMINANT PARTNER. THIS LATEST PERIOD OF CHANGING THE GUARD MAY PROVE TO BE SOMEWHAT MORE GENTLE THAN IN PAST TIMES, BUT SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED MOVES HAVE BEEN THE RULE, NOT THE EXCEPTION, IN KREMLIN POLITICS. ANOTHER ELEMENT IN THE PRESENT SITUATION WHICH ADDS UNCERTAINTY IS THE POOR HEALTH AND ADVANCED

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AGES OF MANY SURVIVING POLITBURO MEMBERS, GIVING RISE TO DOUBTS ABOUT HOW LONG THE NEW LEADERSHIP GROUP WILL REMAIN IN POWER, EVEN IF ITS OWN INTERNAL DIFFERENCES CAN BE SETTLED QUICKLY AND AMICABLY. THE BALANCE IN THE POLITBURO IS RAPIDLY SHIFTING AWAY FROM THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF BREZHNEV'S GENERATION.

C. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOVIET POLICY

• AS BREZHNEV AND HIS COHORTS DEPART FROM THE SCENE, A MUCH YOUNGER GROUP OF PARTY LEADERS WILL COME TO THE FORE -- A GENERATION WHOSE FORMATIVE YEARS CAME AFTER THE TERROR OF THE 1930S AND THE TRAUMA OF WORLD WAR

II. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS POST-WAR GENERATION WILL BE MORE PRAGMATIC IN THEIR APPROACH TO BOTH DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY AND LESS PARANOID IN THEIR VIEWS ABOUT THE WEST -- USING THE OFFICIAL IDEOLOGY SIMPLY TO RATIONALIZE AND LEGITIMIZE THEIR DECISIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS NEW GENERATION COULD TAKE A MORE AGGRESSIVE STANCE IN ITS POLICIES TOWARD THE WEST, HAVING GROWN UP IN A PERIOD WHEN THE USSR ATTAINED SUPERPOWER STATUS, AND HAVING SHED THE INSECURITY OF THE STALIN GENERATION.

• WE CAN MAKE SOME INFORMED GUESSES ABOUT THE POLICY PREFERENCES OF THE CONTENDERS BY LOOKING AT THEIR SPEECHES, BUT WE CANNOT KNOW WHICH POLICY ISSUES THEY WILL ACTUALLY FOLLOW IF THEY MANAGE TO REACH THE TOP AND CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSITION. THE POLICY DEBATE IN THE SUCCESSION WILL BE INFLUENCED FIRST AND FOREMOST BY DOMESTIC FACTORS -- THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY, THE COMPETING DEMANDS OF THE CIVILIAN AND DEFENSE SECTORS, POTENTIAL REGIONAL POLITICAL UNREST, FACTIONAL RIVALRIES, ETC. INTERNATIONAL EVENTS -- INCLUDING NATO POLICY -- WILL ALSO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE.

D. PERSONALITIES

• FOR THE PRESENT, WE CAN CHARACTERIZE IN A BRIEF MANNER THE KNOWN VIEWS OF THE MOST PROMINENT CONTENDERS

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FOR POWER WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP: YURIY ANDROPOV AND
KONTANTIN CHERNENKO.

. ANDROPOV IS REPUTED TO BE AN INTELLIGENT, COMPETENT AND RELATIVELY URBANE PARTY FUNCTIONARY, WITH SOPHISTICATED ARTISTIC AND LITERARY TASTES; IT IS MOST UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS "LIBERAL" IN OUR SENSE OF THE TERM. HE IS NOT KNOWN TO HAVE VISITED THE WEST, YET IS REPUTED TO TAKE A PRAGMATIC, NON-IDEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES -- PERHAPS AS A RESULT OF HIS ACCESS TO RELATIVELY UNDISTORTED INFORMATION ABOUT WORLD EVENTS WHILE KGB CHAIRMAN. IN THE SAME CAPACITY, HOWEVER, HE PRESIDED OVER THE (STILL CONTINUING) CRACKDOWN ON DISSENT AND NON-CONFORMITY, AND IN A PREVIOUS JOB -- AS AMBASSADOR TO HUNGARY IN THE 1950'S -- OVER THE REPRESSION OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION. IN SHORT, HE EVIDENTLY IS TOUGH-MINDED AND CAPABLE OF RUTHLESSNESS. WHILE COMMITTED TO MARXISM-LENINISM, HE MAY PROVE TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE AND SUBTLE IN APPLYING DOCTRINE TO STRATEGY AND TACTICS THAN WAS THE LATE IDEOLOGUE SUSLOV.

. WE KNOW LESS ABOUT CHERNENKO, WHO WAS CONSIDERED LITTLE MORE THAN BREZHNEV'S "BAG-CARRIER" UNTIL THE LATE 1970'S WHEN HE BEGAN TO BE PERCEIVED AS BREZHNEV'S PREFERRED SUCCESSOR, AND HASTENED TO ESTABLISH HIS OWN CREDENTIALS AS AN INNOVATIVE POLICY-MAKER. CHERNENKO IS IDENTIFIED WITH EFFORTS TO REFORM THE SOVIET ECONOMY THROUGH GREATER RESPONSIVENESS TO PUBLIC OPINION; IN SEEKING TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF AS AN EXPERT ON FOREIGN POLICY, HE HAS TAKEN A POSITION SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FROM BREZHNEV'S IN THE SOVIET INTERNAL DEBATE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS, CHALLENGING THE OFFICIAL DOCTRINE THAT THE SOVIET UNION COULD WIN A NUCLEAR WAR. CHERNENKO IS MORE TRAVELED THAN ANDROPOV, BUT HAS FAR LESS INTERNATIONAL EXPERTISE.

E. IMPLICATIONS FOR NATO POLICY

. WE CAN COUNT ON THE TRANSITIONAL REGIME TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF CALM, CONTINUITY AND COLLECTIVITY IN THE

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IMMEDIATE POST-BREZHNEV PERIOD. AS NOTED, WE WILL KNOW
LITTLE ABOUT WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON BEHIND KREMLIN
WALLS. IN THIS MURKY SETTING, WE SHOULD:

. -- STRESS TO MOSCOW THE CONTINUITY OF NATO POLICY
TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION, FIRM IN OUR RESPONSE TO
INSTANCES OF AGGRESSIVE SOVIET BEHAVIOR BUT COMMITTED
TO THE GOAL OF PEACE.

. -- REAFFIRM NATO'S READINESS TO RESPOND POSITIVELY
TO ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN SOVIET POLICY AND SIGNAL
OUR INTENTION TO SEEK EXAMPLES OF A COMPARABLE SOVIET
WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ON
SPECIFIC ISSUES.

. OUR UNDERLYING OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO SEND A
CONSISTENT SIGNAL TO THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT
THE INITIAL PHASE OF THE SUCCESSION PERIOD: IF MOSCOW
GENUINELY DESIRES AN IMPROVED INTERNATIONAL ATMOSPHERE,
AND DEMONSTRATES THIS THROUGH ITS ACTIONS, IT WILL FIND
THE ALLIANCE TO BE APPROPRIATELY RESPONSIVE.
CONVERSELY, THE BURDEN FOR ANY FURTHER DETERIORATION
WILL FALL ON THE SOVIETS. END TEXT. DAM

END OF MESSAGE

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